

Waterfowl Hunt Plan

for

Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

December 11, 2012

Approved:_____ Date:_____
Regional Chief, NWRS

1. Introduction

The Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex was created in the 1960s primarily for the benefit of wintering dusky Canada geese and other migratory waterfowl and birds. The three refuges that comprise the Complex are spread north to south through the Valley with the northernmost being Baskett Slough NWR located near Salem; Ankeny NWR located near Jefferson; and William L. Finley NWR to the south of Corvallis. Map 1 shows the location of the refuges within the Valley.

In September 2011 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) adopted a Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan and Environmental Assessment (USFWS 2011) for Ankeny, Baskett Slough, and William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuges. This CCP/EA was preceded by a Draft CCP/EA which evaluated three management options (alternatives) for the CCP and disclosed anticipated effects for each alternative, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), as amended ([42 U.S.C. 4321-4347](#)). The Draft CCP/EA was available for public comment and review from May 25, 2011 through June 30, 2011. After evaluating comments received on the CCP/EA and responding to public comments, the Service adopted Alternative 2 in the Final CCP/EA, which had been identified as the Service's Preferred Alternative, for implementation.

The CCP sets forth management guidance for the Refuges over the next 15 years, as required by the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 ([16 U.S.C. 688dd-688ee](#), as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997). The Improvement Act mandated that CCPs be developed for all refuges in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

As part of setting forth future management guidance, the CCP and accompanying hunt plan (Appendix G in the Final CCP/EA) introduced and evaluated establishing a goose hunting and youth waterfowl hunting program at Baskett Slough National Wildlife Refuge (Baskett Slough Refuge).

Since publication of the Final CCP, this hunt plan has been further refined. This document is prepared as a step-down plan to the CCP and developed to consolidate the information pertaining to waterfowl hunting opportunities at Baskett Slough Refuge.

1.1 Species Covered By This Plan

Species That Can Be Hunted On Baskett Slough NWR

- Ducks (All Species) only during the Youth Duck Hunt (generally last weekend of September).
- Geese (Western or Great Basin Canada) (*Branta canadensis moffitti*) only during the Early September Goose Hunt.

The species listed below have populations sufficient to allow for recreational harvest. No commercial harvesting of wildlife or use of hunting guides would be allowed to assure continued healthy populations and general public opportunity.

1.2 Game Species Not Hunted

Due to conflicts with refuge purposes and other forms of wildlife-dependent recreation, hunting of any other game species will not be allowed on the refuges.

2. Conformance with Statutory Authority

2.1 Conformance with Statutory Objectives

Any use of a national wildlife refuge must be compatible with resource protection and conform to applicable laws, regulations, and Service policies. Recreational use, in this case hunting, is allowed under the Refuge Recreation Act of 1962 (16 U.S.C. 460K, amended), which authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to administer refuges, hatcheries, and other conservation areas for recreational use. The Refuge Recreation Act requires: 1) that any recreational use permitted will not interfere with the primary purpose for which the refuge was established; and 2) that funds are available for the development, operation, and maintenance of the permitted forms of recreation.

Likewise, statutory authority for Service management and associated habitat/wildlife management planning on units of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) is derived from the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee). The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act provided a mission for the NWRS and clear standards for its management, use, planning, and growth. The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act recognizes that wildlife-dependent recreational uses—hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, environmental education, and interpretation—when determined to be compatible with the mission of the NWRS and the purposes of the refuge—are legitimate and appropriate public uses of National Wildlife Refuges. Sections 5(c) and (d) of the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act states “compatible wildlife-dependent recreational uses are the priority general public uses of the NWRS and shall receive priority consideration in planning and management; and when the Secretary [of the Interior] determines that a proposed wildlife-dependent recreational use is a compatible use within a refuge, that activity should be facilitated, subject to such restrictions or regulations as may be necessary, reasonable, and appropriate.”

2.2 Conformance with Refuge Purposes

Conformance of refuge uses with refuge purposes is determined through a formal compatibility determination process. Compatibility means that the use would not materially interfere with or detract from the fulfillment of the purposes of the refuge(s) or mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (603 FW2).

The waterfowl hunt, as described below in Section 4, was determined to be compatible with refuge purposes, with stipulations.

3. Statement of Goals and Objectives

3.1 Refuge Goals

Thirteen goals were developed for the Willamette Valley Refuges during the Comprehensive Conservation Planning process. They include:

1. Provide agricultural crops for all Canada geese, especially duskys, which, together with wetland management and sanctuary, ensures a healthy, viable wintering goose population in support of

Pacific Flyway management and depredation control plans.

2. Maintain, enhance, and restore a diversity of wetland habitats characteristic of the historic Willamette Valley.
3. Maintain and restore native Willamette Valley wet prairie habitats, with an emphasis on management for rare and listed plant species, native species diversity, and functional attributes for declining grassland birds.
4. Restore and enhance the native upland prairie/oak savanna habitats characteristic of the historic Willamette Valley, with an emphasis on management for rare and listed plant species, native species diversity and functional attributes for declining grassland birds.
5. Protect and maintain oak woodland habitats representative of the historic Willamette Valley.
6. Maintain and enhance mixed deciduous/coniferous habitats characteristic of the historic Willamette Valley.
7. Maintain and restore a diversity of native riparian floodplain habitats characteristic of the historic Willamette Valley.
8. Protect and maintain natural riverine habitats representative of the historic Willamette Valley.
9. Contribute to the protection and recovery of Federally threatened and endangered species and their habitats within the Willamette Valley.
10. Provide compatible, wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities for visitors, fostering appreciation and understanding of the refuges' fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats.
11. Protect, preserve, evaluate, and interpret the cultural heritage and resources of the refuges while consulting with appropriate Native American groups and preservation organizations and complying with historic preservation legislation.
12. Protect, restore, and maintain off-refuge habitats to achieve conservation goals at the landscape level throughout the Willamette Valley.
13. Collect scientific information (inventories, monitoring, research, or scientific assessments) necessary to support refuge management.

3.2 Refuge Objectives for Hunting

Goal 10 of the Final CCP for Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex pertains directly to the provision of wildlife dependent recreational opportunities on the refuges. The waterfowl hunt program objective was developed as part of the CCP development process and is repeated below. The objective numeric identifier (10f) is consistent with the objective numbering system in the CCP/EA. The more complete program description is found in Section 4 of this hunt plan.

Objective 10f: Provide opportunities for quality waterfowl hunting

Provide new opportunities for the public to participate in quality waterfowl hunting at Baskett Slough Refuge while minimizing impact to wintering geese, other wildlife and other recreational users. Provide a quality hunting experience that:

- Places a priority on safety (hunters are spaced appropriately, spatial separation exists between hunt areas and areas open to other recreational use, having adequate law enforcement presence, etc.).
- Includes clear and concise regulations readily available at the refuge website and posted clearly in the field.
- Poses minimal conflict with wildlife/habitat objectives.
- Poses minimal conflict with other Big Six activities.
- Poses minimal conflict with neighboring lands.
- Is accessible to a broad spectrum of visitors.
- Promotes stewardship & conservation.
- Promotes understanding and appreciation of natural resources and FWS role.
- Provides reliable / reasonable opportunity to experience wildlife.
- Uses accessible facilities that blend into landscape.
- Uses visitor satisfaction to define and evaluate programs.

4. Description of Hunting Program

The areas potentially open to waterfowl hunting on Baskett Slough refuge are shown on Map 2. This map is a slight revision of the area originally proposed for hunting in the Final CCP/EA.

4.1 Waterfowl Hunting – Proposed Program**Table 1. Early Season Goose Hunt Proposed Program**

Aspect	Description
Location	Baskett Slough Refuge. Hunting would be potentially allowable at Dusky, Vancouver, Cackler, Taverner's, Parvipes, and Moffitti Marshes, and some areas of adjacent fields. A maximum of 498 acres (20% of the refuge) plus not more than 358 acres of adjacent fields would be open to goose hunting in any one year for a combined maximal total of 34% of the Refuge available to hunt (See Map 2). The actual areas open in each year would be subject to water availability and management discretion. Year by year maps would be made available to the public at the Refuge and on the Complex website.
Season	Opening weekend and closing weekend of the State September season, for a total of four open days.
Blinds	Temporary blinds may be constructed or brought in, and must be removed at the end of the day.
Fees	None

Permits	Up to ten hunt parties would be allowed with a maximum of three hunters permitted per party. Hunt parties would be required to space themselves no less than 200 yards apart from each other. Hunters would be selected through a drawing prior to the hunt dates (See section on application procedures).
Other hunt regulations	All hunters must have a valid state hunting license. Hunters 16 years of age or older must have a valid federal waterfowl stamp in possession. Hunters 14 years of age or older must have a state waterfowl validation in possession. The taking of white-fronted, Aleutian, or cackling Canada geese would be prohibited. Other hunt regulations per state (ODFW) rules apply.

Table 2. Youth Duck Hunt Proposed Program

Aspect	Description
Location	Baskett Slough Refuge. Hunting would be potentially allowable at Dusky, Vancouver, Cackler, Taverner's, Parvipes, and Moffitt Marshes. A maximum of 498 acres (20% of the refuge) would be open to youth duck hunting in any one year (See Map 2). The actual areas open in each year would be subject to water availability and management discretion. Year by year maps would be made available to the public at the Refuge and on the Complex website.
Season	As designated by ODFW (usually the last weekend in September).
Blinds	Blind sites would be determined prior to the hunt by refuge staff. Hunting would be restricted to the designated blind sites.
Fees	None
Permits	Up to five designated hunt sites would be available with a maximum of two youths and one parent or guardian permitted to occupy each site. Youths would be selected through a drawing.
Other hunt regulations	Open to youths 15 years of age and younger. A parent or guardian (age 21 and above) must accompany up to two youths. The parent or guardian may not hunt. Youths participating in the hunt must have both a Hunter Education Certificate and a valid hunting license in possession. Hunters 14 years of age or older must have a state waterfowl validation in possession. All goose hunting is closed in Polk County where Baskett Slough Refuge is located during the September Youth Hunt. Other hunt regulations per state (ODFW) rules apply.

The refuge would conduct these hunts to coincide with the State early September goose season and the State youth waterfowl hunt weekend. The early goose season generally starts the first weekend in September and extends for nine to ten days. The State youth waterfowl hunt is generally scheduled during the last weekend in September. The refuge would maintain the discretion to develop the framework of these hunts within this timeframe.

Facilities: The refuge office would serve as the check station where hunters would be required to check in and check out. refuge staff would operate the check station and check in/check out procedures.

The refuge will evaluate the number and location of hunt sites each year and make any changes or adjustments to the program each season based on these evaluations.

4.2 Justification for a Permit-Only Hunt Program

The small sizes of the refuges create the need for a permit program in certain areas to avoid conflicts between hunters and potential safety issues. An established number of permits (as described above for the waterfowl hunt program) would allow desired hunter density, so as to provide un-crowded and safe hunting conditions.

4.3 Procedures for Consultation and Coordination with ODFW

Service staff will coordinate with ODFW staff regarding annual hunt season dates, areas open to hunting, etc. The Service would request that ODFW publish information on the refuge deer hunt and waterfowl hunt annually in the State hunting regulations.

5. Measures Taken to Avoid Conflicts with Other Management Objectives

5.1 Measures to Avoid Biological Conflicts

Disturbance to wintering geese would be minimized due to the following provisions. Waterfowl hunting would not be permitted on any refuge lands after October 1, which marks the beginning of the wintering season for migratory waterfowl in the Willamette Valley.

Harm to other biological resources would be avoided, since hunters would only be allowed in designated areas and will be limited to a very short time period in early-mid fall.

5.2 Measures to Avoid Public Use Conflicts

Various aspects of the proposed hunt programs, including temporal restrictions and spatial restrictions, combined with the seasonal nature of recreational activities on the refuges, would reduce the potential for conflict. Other measures taken to avoid or reduce potential conflicts with these programs include posting hunt signs to maintain public awareness during hunting periods, and posting information about hunt periods on the refuge website.

5.3 Measures to Avoid Administrative Conflicts

The hunt program has the potential to conflict with some of the normal management, maintenance, and biological monitoring activities that might be occurring in the same vicinity as the hunt program. Safety briefings for staff and cooperative farmers working in or near hunt areas would occur. Hunters would be warned of refuge activities that might be occurring nearby. These measures would ensure the safety of refuge staff and Service authorized agents and allow the completion of refuge management activities as well as other refuge uses. The project leader would retain the discretion to close areas to hunting when necessary to further achievement of other refuge management activities or for the safety of hunters who could be at risk from refuge management activities (e.g., prescribed fire). Overall, there would be minimal administrative conflicts expected.

Outreach about the new hunting programs will require minimal reprogramming of existing resources.

6. Assessment

6.1 Compatibility with Refuge Objectives

Hunting is one of the six wildlife-dependent recreational uses included in the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Conducting well-managed hunts on Baskett Slough and W.L. Finley Refuges will assist the refuges in meeting one of the Refuge System's primary goals (providing the public opportunities to participate in compatible wildlife-dependent recreational programs). The special youth-only hunt also provides a unique opportunity for the refuge to introduce young hunters to the National Wildlife Refuge System and educate them on the importance of wildlife conservation.

Compatibility with other refuge programs is addressed below.

6.2 Biological and Other Considerations

Waterfowl (Ducks – All Species; Geese – Western Canada goose)

Potential effects of waterfowl hunting to target populations, non-target species, listed species, refuge habitats, and other public use programs are summarized in Table 3. Section 5 examines measures to avoid conflicts with these resources. See also the Waterfowl Hunting Compatibility Determination (Appendix C, page C-16 in the Final CCP/EA).

6.3 Funding and Staffing Requirements for the Hunt

The proposed waterfowl hunt at Baskett Slough Refuge would require staff time by the Refuge Manager, maintenance staff, and the law enforcement officer. Approximately \$56,000 in one-time costs are projected, and the total annual cost to administer the hunt with the changes proposed is projected to be approximately \$13,000 per year. Additional operational funding would be requested in order to administer this hunt.

Table 3. Anticipated Effects of the Waterfowl Hunt

Effects	Conclusion*
Effects to target populations	<p>The September goose hunt would confine harvest to Western Canada geese, which are currently above population objectives in the Pacific Flyway (see Chapter 1, Section 1.14.1 and Chapter 4, Section 4.10 of the Final CCP/EA for more information on goose composition and population objectives in the Willamette Valley). Less than 100 ducks and geese per year are estimated to be taken under the refuge waterfowl hunts. Hunting would not have a significant impact on local, regional, or Pacific Flyway waterfowl populations because the percentage taken on the refuge, though possibly additive to existing hunting take, would measure a fraction of a percent of the estimated duck and goose populations. Dusky Canada geese are not expected to be impacted by the harvest as they would not yet have arrived on their wintering grounds during the season of this hunt.</p> <p>In addition to direct mortality, hunting could result in some redistribution of Western Canada geese at Baskett Slough Refuge due to disturbance.</p>

Effects to non-target species	Potential minor disturbance to other foraging or resting birds from dogs, human activity, and noise associated with hunting. Hunter education courses are required by ODFW for youths. Orientation would be provided to all duck and goose hunters before the start of each hunting day. These measures would help to reduce effects to non-target species. At this time, dusky Canada geese would not be impacted as they arrive later in the fall. If dusky arrival time shifted to earlier in the fall, these hunts would be re-evaluated.
Effects to refuge habitats	Effects confined to wetland and cropland habitat types. Up to 34% of Baskett Slough Refuge would be open to hunting during the specified seasons (6 days/year). Negligible effect would be expected to vegetation from trampling, because of the low number of users and days of use expected. Some potential conflicts with the cooperative farming program at Baskett Slough could occur but would be minimized by limiting waterfowl hunting to the 6 days mentioned above.
Effects to listed species	Negligible impact; potential for minor trampling but any listed plants in the area will have senesced by the start of the season. No impact to Fender's blue butterfly habitat or listed fish.
Effects to other priority public uses	Minor effects to other users because of the short season. Minor potential for a perception of favoritism for one user group over another, because other users are not allowed into the Baskett Slough wetlands at any time. However, providing opportunities for youth is an important initiative in the Fish and Wildlife Service and helps address a public desire to see more hunting opportunities for youth.

* (see Waterfowl Hunting Compatibility Determination from the Final CCP/EA and Baskett Slough Waterfowl Hunt Plan Supplemental Environmental Assessment for more detail).

7. Conduct of the Hunt

Location-specific regulations would provide for the safety of visitors and the accommodation of many uses.

7.1 Anticipated Public Reaction to the Hunt

The existing hunting program is generally accepted locally and does not typically generate anti-hunting controversy. Nationally, there is a component of the population that is opposed to hunting, and some organizations are opposed to hunting, or at least the expansion of hunting, on national wildlife refuges and other public lands. During the review of the Draft CCP/EA during May-June 2011, some members of the public voiced objections to some or all of the hunts within this plan. There are some local hunters who strongly support expanded access and who would have liked to have seen an even larger expansion of the hunt program.

7.2 Hunter Application Procedures

Youth Duck Hunt: Youths wishing to hunt would be required to fill out and send a post card, for each of the available days they wish to hunt, with their name, address, and the words “Baskett Slough Youth Hunt” (see Hunter Selection Process).

Early Season Goose Hunt: Hunters would be required in advance to fill out and submit a post card to the refuge for each of the days they wish to hunt (see Hunter Selection Process).

7.3 Description of Hunter Selection Process

Youth Hunt: Youth hunt permits would be selected using a random drawing conducted by refuge staff. Those that are selected would be notified prior to the hunt days. Those that are not selected would not be notified.

Early Season Goose Hunt: Hunt permits would be selected using a random drawing conducted by refuge staff. Those that are selected would be notified prior to the hunt days. Those that are not selected would not be notified.

7.4 Media Selection for Publicizing the Hunt

Newspapers and television stations throughout Oregon would be provided copies of an annual news release covering the hunts. Descriptive tearsheets would be printed and dispensed at refuge offices, brochure boxes at refuge parking lots, and available online at the refuge web site.

7.5 Description of Hunter Orientation

Hunter orientations would be provided to all duck/goose hunters daily at the Baskett Slough Youth and Early Goose Season Hunts. Check station attendants would publicly review hunt regulations and permit requirements before issuing hunt permits to advanced reservation holders for each day. The check station would open 1 ½ hours before established State shooting times each day of a hunt. Hunters would be given their permits at this time.

7.6 Hunter Requirements and Regulations

- (1) Age: Federal criteria only allows hunters 15 years of age and younger to participate in the Youth Waterfowl Hunt. Youths must be accompanied by an adult 21 years of age or older.
- (2) Allowable equipment (Early Season Goose and Youth Waterfowl Hunts): Blinds, decoys, and other personal property must be removed at the end of each day's hunt. Vehicles are restricted to designated public use roads and designated parking areas. Dogs are allowed for hunting ducks and geese. Toxic shot is prohibited for the early September Goose Hunt and the Youth Duck Hunt.
- (3) Wearing hunter orange is required for youth hunters as per State regulations.
- (4) Open fires are not allowed.
- (5) License and permits: Hunting permits are required. The license requirements are those required by the State of Oregon and the Federal duck stamp for waterfowl hunting.
- (6) Reporting harvest: Waterfowl and goose permit hunters must check back in to the check station at Baskett Slough.
- (7) Hunter safety requirements: Goose hunters would be required to space themselves no less than 200 yards apart from each other during the early September Goose Hunt. Designated hunt sites would be established for the Youth Duck Hunt. Wearing hunter orange would be required for all youth hunters as per State regulations.
- (8) No overnight camping or after-hours parking is permitted on the refuges.
- (9) No hunting is permitted from refuge structures, observation blinds, boardwalks, etc.
- (10) All vehicles must remain parked in designated areas.
- (11) Persons possessing, transporting, or carrying firearms on national wildlife refuges must comply with all provisions of State and local laws. Persons may only use (discharge) firearms in accordance with refuge regulations (50 CFR 27.42 and specific refuge regulations in Part 32).

8. References

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2011. Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuges: Ankeny, Baskett Slough, and William L. Finley National Wildlife Refuges. Final Comprehensive Plan and Environmental Assessment. Prepared by Willamette Valley National Wildlife Refuge Complex and USFWS Pacific Northwest Planning Team. September 2011.